

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
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First West Nile Virus Case of 2015 Reported in North Dakota

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Health has confirmed the first human case of West Nile virus (WNV) disease in 2015 in North Dakota. Additionally, two mosquito pools from Grand Forks County have tested positive for WNV. To help avoid contracting the virus, state and local health officials urge people to protect themselves from mosquito bites.

The patient is a female in her 40s who resides in McLean County. The patient was not hospitalized for her illness. “The identification of West Nile virus in a person is a reminder of the importance of protecting ourselves from the bites of mosquitoes,” said Laura Cronquist, epidemiologist with the North Dakota Department of Health. “It is particularly important for people over the age of 50 and those with other medical conditions to prevent mosquito bites, as they are more at risk for severe complications from West Nile virus.”

NDDoH recommends residents take these precautions to avoid mosquito bites:

- Use insect repellents containing ingredients registered with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – such as DEET, picaridin, IR3535, oil of lemon eucalyptus (or PMD) or permethrin – and apply according to manufacturer’s instructions
- Wear protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts and pants
- Limit outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most likely to bite
- Eliminate stagnant water in containers around homes where mosquitoes can lay their eggs (such as buckets, flowerpots, old tires, wading pools and birdbaths)
- Keep the grass around your home trimmed

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In 2014, the NDDoH received reports that 23 people tested positive for West Nile virus. Of those 23, eight were hospitalized and one died. West Nile infection was also identified one cow, one horse and two moose. The common symptoms of West Nile virus include fever, headache, body aches and rash. People with more severe illness may experience symptoms such as stiff neck, confusion, paralysis, coma and even death. Fortunately, most people infected with West Nile virus develop the less severe form of the disease or develop no symptoms at all.

For more information about West Nile virus, contact Laura Cronquist, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2378 or visit www.ndhealth.gov/wnv.

Note: The Department of Health's Policy for Release of Information Concerning West Nile Virus Cases is included on the next page for your information.

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Policy for Release of Information Concerning West Nile Virus Cases

The North Dakota Department of Health strives to protect the identity and the privacy of people who are infected with diseases, including West Nile virus, while at the same time protecting the public's health. The following list identifies the information the Department of Health will release to the media and/or public concerning West Nile virus cases.

West Nile Virus Cases

- Number of cases per county
- Number of males and females statewide
- Number hospitalized statewide
- Number of cases by age group statewide
 - Younger than 10
 - Ages 10 to 19
 - Ages 20 to 29
 - Ages 30 to 39
 - Ages 40 to 49
 - Ages 50 to 59
 - Age 60 and older

West Nile Virus Deaths

- Region of the state in which the person resided
- Age group of the person
- The person's gender
- If the person had any underlying medical conditions

Information about a West Nile virus death will be released only after the department has consulted with the patient's health-care provider and after the provider has communicated with the patient's family. The local public health unit in which the person resided also will be notified prior to release of information.

If you have any questions, please contact Colleen Reinke, North Dakota Department of Health Office of Public Information, at 701.328.2372.

Communication policy developed 2002; updated 2006.

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